

CITY OF SAINT PAUL

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September 23, 2011

Payne Maryland Project Update

Community Meeting August 24, 2011

The Schematic Design for the project was presented at a community meeting Aug. 24 at the Arlington Hills Lutheran Church. Approximately 150 people attended and heard a presentation by Chris Gibbs of HGA Architects and Engineers. The meeting had been advertised openly in the East Side Review newspaper and direct email contact by the Payne-Phalen District 5 Planning Council. A review of the meeting agenda, documents, and input can be found on the website at: Community Meeting August 24, 2011.

Notes from discussion of the plans at each table were submitted, and each person also received an input sheet for their personal thoughts. Those sheets were collected and are all contained in the above meeting summary. The design team is reviewing all the input received for its affect on the design process.

So here is a summary of the major comments we heard, and our initial response:

- 1. <u>Safety and security is a big challenge, and wasn't addressed.</u> Response: Safety of visitors is a priority and will be addressed through safety design, lighting, and staff and technological monitoring. To address these difficult issues, solutions will mesh design team, City staff, and police input. Safety concerns will be addressed and more should be known by the next meeting.
- 2. Providing a broad range of programs to meet community needs, including theater, gathering spaces, adult education and fitness, youth and teen programs, sports, multi-cultural opportunities, and technology access. Response: This reflects the range of programs in our planning. Much thanks to the 23 people who expressed interest in being part of the community focus groups on developing these programs; these focus group meetings will be scheduled soon.
- 3. <u>Site development has strengths and weaknesses; strengths include keeping the fields and providing the Town Square for outdoor events; weaknesses include size of fields for competition and support and parking.</u> Response: The existing and new fields are not generous in size, and won't support full-sized competition, but we plan to make them as usable as possible. The Town Square will provide much-needed community identity space,





and other outdoor use spaces will be developed. Parking will meet the City's zoning requirement.

- 4. Building plans are a good mix of meeting spaces, library, and recreation, and appear to be flexible in use. Response: Flexibility is an important aspect of design for the present and future uses. For example, the large Assembly Room will include portable staging, lighting, sound system, kitchen, and technology to host a presentation ceremony, performance, webinar/business meeting, children's lunch program, or a family reunion, and can be set up in a variety of manners with either tables or chairs. Technology will support display of incoming feeds, and recording/generation of events for outgoing feed. Flexibility is also being designed into the library and teen center spaces to support a wide range of activities, and allow for future re-arranging of the spaces and uses. The smaller meeting spaces can be divided into 2 rooms, and will support teaching, crafts, and active uses. The budget does place some limit on the size and quantity of these spaces, and we will try to optimize the mix of spaces provided.
- 5. The building exterior needs to reflect community context and include public art. Response: The initial exterior drawings had supportive comments, but the majority commented that it does not feel as though it fits into the neighborhood. The design team includes an artist who will help define the architectural context of the community, and work that into the building exterior design. The artist will also be identifying cultural and historical identities of the community, and establishing format and context for public art to be included in the project.
- 6. The community supports sustainable design initiatives. Response: The City's Sustainable Design Ordinance is guiding the design team in designing for energy efficiency, occupant comfort and health, sustainable site development, and innovative technologies. This will help make the spaces comfortable, such as capturing natural light, and energy efficient to help keep operating costs lower, as well as making good environmental choices. At the next community meeting, the design development that defines these efforts can be explained. We will also examine whether solar- or wind-energy collection can be part of this project
- 7. A contingency of the community is not supportive of this project, and feels that this effort is misguided in addressing community issues. Response: This project has been in community discussions for over 4 years, and has received wide support from community members, and elected officials who realize that not everyone is in support of the project. Input on the architectural design from community members was actively sought at this meeting, and all were given an opportunity to express their thoughts on any subject at an open microphone to the entire group. While many at the meeting expressed non-support, it is noteworthy that the majority of input comments collected were supportive, even though those people may not have been outspoken with their thoughts. The City welcomes constructive input on the project design that will help address community issues, and are monitoring the e-democracy blog site as well as the direct input on the City's project web site.
- 8. The budget of the project is not clearly understood, and the affect on City closings of other recreation centers is a concern. Response: The City has sold capital improvement bonds to provide funds for this project, and available funds are just under \$14 million. Capital improvement funds cannot be spent on operating costs for this facility or other City programs. The City's System Plan recommended reducing the number of facilities operated, and some have been closed; however, no decision has been reached to close Duluth and Case Recreation Center, in part due to the strong community support of that facility. The Payne Maryland facility plans to take advantage of complementary staff efforts and partner assistance to maximize the availability to the community of vital spaces and programs.

What else is happening?

Kit Hadley, Director of Saint Paul Public Libraries, has committed to involving the community in the planning and request for proposals for re-use of the historic Arlington Hills Library building. The City plans to seek re-use of the structure which will meet community-use requirements, and will be seeking community input during the process.

A total of 23 people responded to the Interest Survey form. Those people expressed interest to be involved in helping to define and develop the programs and facilities. Program areas include: Seniors, Children/Families, Teens, and Unmet Needs. Facilities areas include: Reuse of the Arlington Hills Library, Construction Issues, and Tot Lot Development. Planning for initial meetings to organize those interested is starting, and people will be directly contacted regarding the meetings. Meetings will also be announced on the City project web site, and through the Payne Phalen District 5 Planning Council.

The design team is also making effort to reach out to non-English speaking population. We plan to conduct a repeat of the Schematic Design presentation to Hmong and Spanish speaking groups through translators to seek their input on the design. We will also welcome their participation in the facilities and programs development focus groups.

How does this work with Phase 2?

A number of questions were posed Aug. 24 about how the plans work/mesh with Phase 2 of the project. Others asked about the legal issues that might be involved. Carolyn Brusseau, Chair of the Payne Maryland Partners, discussed the organization of their group and the current efforts in fund raising. The reason no discussion of Phase 2 plans was offered is that City funds are not being spent to develop any of Phase 2 design, and therefore no information is available. The conceptual design work done in early 2010 identified the general area of the site for the future building and additional parking, and that concept is reflected in the Phase 1 site development. The City attorneys, after consultation with constitutional law experts, concluded that Phase 2, as currently envisioned, will not present legal issues.

What is next?

The design team is already working on the next stage of the project design called Design Development. Soils exploration for geothermal and structural design information are being conducted already. Engineers and architects are working to develop the character and detailed size of rooms and systems for the building. Landscape Architects and artists are working to provide site development guidelines, and community and public art context.

The next community presentation is tentatively scheduled for November 2011. This site and the Payne-Phalen District 5 Planning Council will both provide meeting advertisement.

Have a thought or idea?

Please consider using the input option on this web site. You can also send me (Brian Tourtelotte) an email by clicking on my name in the Project Manager identity. Thoughts submitted come directly to my email box, and are retained. They will be shared with the design team, but are otherwise not going to be made public.